Overall, I’d say a lot has changed, but not in how one would expect.

For instance, I did not think I would ever enjoy writing so much and revising so much. That’s never been my thing. But seriously, these lesson plans I had to do…. Phewwww. \*show picture of a lesson plan I did\*. Working so hard on this (arrow), finishing it, having my peers and future colleagues (and kind of current colleagues) tell me that it was great, that they loved all of it, and that they couldn’t really think of anything big to improve on, made my heart swell in such a way… well I can’t even explain it.

My beliefs though, they’ve stayed pretty much the same. I feel like I will still be the same kind of teacher that I started this course as. I have a lot of experience for someone as young as me, I assisted a lot in a few different classes, and I feel like during that time I definitely figured out who I wanted to be and how I wanted to teach. I still want to be the teacher that makes learning fun, that gives students choices, that treats them with respect as people and not just learners, and that honestly cares. Reflecting back on my Essential Belief Statement, I can see this in me at the beginning of class,

“My goal as a teacher is more to be a mentor than just to be a mere knowledge dispenser, as I feel many teachers end up becoming. I know how important these years are for people; this is when they finally start understanding who they and begin grasping their sense of identity. It’s also their first experience with some of the responsibilities of being an adult. These things are both exciting and frightening for students, and it is important for someone other than a parent to be a model and a resource for them, whether it is a neighbor, a guidance counselor, or a teacher.”

One thing that has changed though, is the way I plan lessons. I’d planned lessons before, the way my teachers had taught, starting with what the activity should be and morphing it into how it can teach what needs to be learned. Now, I know that isn’t the way to go. No matter how malleable an activity or project is, creativity is born from starting backwards.

What needs to be learned? How can they learn it in a fun and memorable way?

This is how true, permament knowledge is born.

Well, with this, and with a diverse and engaging classroom. I learned a lot about how to diversify lessons and increase opportunities for choice and creativity this semester. Previously, I had the hardest time trying to come up with fun ways to get students to show their learning in history, its not the easiest subject to mix it up. Assessments in history were always tests, essays, or movies. Now I’ve come up with a bunch of new ways—a giant binder full—to see what my students have learned and their thoughts on current and past issues. With various assessments that allow choice and freedom for the students, you give kids the ability to truly demonstrate what they know. Not everyone can take a test or make a movie, but a student may be able to make a CD mix with different songs, and write a little paragraph about how each song demonstrates social inequality throughout history.

Now, for the important part. What do I deserve for my work over this semester. Well, things have been crazy all semester, especially at the end of the semester, and there were times that I felt like I couldn’t plow through, but I did. Even now, this work is hard. I haven’t looked at it in a long time and usually I don’t even know where to start. But I keep plowing through. I have worked as hard as I can and pushed myself to the limits, sometimes stressing myself out, but usually surprising myself. I definitely feel like I deserve an A, or an A-. I pushed myself as hard as I could because I knew how much this class could teach me and how much I could benefit from the hard work.